

EXHIBIT 34

ICYMI: As Lawmakers Escalate Attacks on Transgender Youth Across the Country, Some GOP Leaders Stand Up for Transgender Youth

by Henry Berg-Brousseau • March 24, 2022



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Two Republican governors vetoed anti-transgender legislation this week, breaking ranks with their GOP colleagues

WASHINGTON– This week, Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb, Utah Gov. Spencer Cox, and Former Speaker of the Texas House Joe Straus – all Republicans – each chose to stand on the right side of history by speaking out against the coordinated legislative attacks on the LGBTQ+ community – especially transgender youth – underway in their states and nationwide.

With more than [300 anti-LGBTQ+ bills](#) introduced this year, more than 130 of which specifically target transgender people, the voices of lawmakers who are willing to push back against this wave of bills – whether they are Democratic or Republican – are more important than ever before.

Hear what these Republican leaders, including two sitting Governors, had to say in response to anti-transgender legislation:

Gov. Spencer Cox, *Utah (R)*:

"We love you. We care deeply about you. We need you to be okay and we want to help you in any way possible." ([Source](#))

"Anyone that's interacted with the transgender community understands how amazing they are and how difficult it can be for them. **I don't want to make things harder for them than they have to be.**" ([Source](#))

"All this bill does is invite a lawsuit. **As conservatives, it doesn't make any sense for us to just buy a lawsuit.**" ([Source](#))

"These kids are ... they're just trying to stay alive. [...] When you spend time with these kids, it changes your heart in important ways, and so I want to try to improve that message and see if we can't find a better way to work together." (Source)

Gov. Eric Holcomb, Indiana (R):

"The presumption of the policy laid out in HEA 1041 is that there is an existing problem in K-12 sports in Indiana that requires further state government intervention. It implies that the goals of consistency and fairness in competitive female sports are not currently being met. **After a thorough review, I find no evidence to support either claim even if I support the overall goal."** ([Source](#))

"[O]f the several states that have passed similar legislation, lawsuits have been filed or have threatened to be filed. **In the two cases with initial rulings thus far, the courts have enjoined or prohibited laws with these same substantive provisions from taking effect based on equal protection grounds."** ([Source](#))

Joe Straus, Former Speaker of the Texas House (R):

"There's no other way to describe it. It is a fixation. In my view, it's going after a very vulnerable population, a population of people who have a much higher risk of suicidal thoughts, if not action. **I thought it was mean-spirited, I thought all of these (bills) are examples of legislatures trying to pass laws to address problems that don't exist."** ([Source](#))

BACKGROUND:

We are facing the worst attack on LGBTQ+ dignity and humanity that we have seen in decades:

This year, anti-equality legislators have launched an unprecedented legislative assault on LGBTQ+ people in state legislatures across the country– surpassing 2021 as the worst year on record for introducing and enacting anti-LGBTQ+ legislation in statehouses across the country.

In 2021, More than 290 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were introduced across 33 states in 2021, including more than 140 specifically anti-transgender bills. Each of these marks set a new record for anti-equality legislation being introduced and enacted in a single state legislative session since the Human Rights Campaign began tracking legislation.

In 2021, the worst year on record for anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, 25 bills were enacted, 13 of which targeted transgender youth [despite legislators failing to provide examples of what exactly they were legislating against.](#)

2022 has seen even more bills introduced. HRC is tracking 583+ pieces of potentially LGBTQ+-related legislation introduced in the 2022 state legislative session. 313+ of these bills are harmful, and 137+ are anti-trans bills

These bills aren't popular and are not driven by constituent demand:

This unprecedented wave of discriminatory legislation is not organic – **these bills are part of a coordinated effort driven by well-funded, powerful interests and promoted by a tight network of anti-LGBTQ+ forces – including the Heritage Foundation, SPLC-designated hate group Alliance Defending Freedom, and Focus on the Family – who often write and lobby for passage of carbon copy bills in as many states as possible.** These groups peddle in fear and pit people against each other to marginalize and punish LGBTQ+ people — and especially transgender children.

The reality is, support for LGBTQ+ rights has grown exponentially. [Polling shows that LGBTQ+ rights are broadly supported – and continue to tick upwards – in contrast to the onslaught of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation moving in states across the country.](#)

This wave of dangerous proposals exacts a heartbreaking toll on LGBTQ+ people—especially trans youth:

These bills highlight the discrimination, marginalization, and pain that LGBTQ+ people – especially young people, trans youth, and their families – continue to face. Too often, it's transgender young people who are caught in the crosshairs of anti-LGBTQ+ equality legislator's divisive political strategy. 2020 set a record number for anti-transgender bills filed with 79 bills; 2021 surpassed that record with 147 such bills, and now 2022 is now on track to break the record yet again. **For transgender youth – who are simply trying to navigate their adolescence – to bear the weight of these attacks year after year, these bills take a toll.**

Politicians working to discriminate against LGBTQ+ people will be responsible for very real harm. According to recent surveys, [higher numbers of LGBTQ+ people experience depressive symptoms in states considering discriminatory bills](#) while [a startling 85% of transgender or gender non-binary youth say their mental health had been negatively affected by these legislative attacks.](#)

For LGBTQ+ young people, anti-LGBTQ+ laws indicate that they are unworthy of respect, decency, and visibility with heartbreaking results: just listen to 11-year-old [Libby Gonzales](#) describing how it feels to be subjected to repeated attacks by her state legislature, or 14-year-old [Rebekah](#) about how much being able to play sports means to her, and 11-year-old [Maya](#) who details how she is able to be the person she's always been because of life-saving gender-affirming medical care.

Unfortunately, the discrimination peddled by anti-equality legislators can be deadly. According to data from the Trevor Project, [42% of LGBTQ+ youth nationwide seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, including more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth.](#) **Discrimination can also instigate intolerance and signal permission to single out LGBTQ+ individuals – which has had deadly consequences for transgender people.** 2021 and 2020 were the deadliest and second deadliest years on record for trans & gender non-conforming people respectively, with the Human Rights Campaign tracking [at least 50](#) violent deaths in 2021 alone.

Discrimination is bad policy and bad for businesses:

[The nation's leading child health and welfare groups](#) representing more than 7 million youth-serving professionals and more than 1,000 child welfare organizations released an open letter calling for lawmakers in states across the country to oppose dozens of bills that target LGBTQ+ people, and transgender children in particular.

[More than 180 major U.S. corporations](#) have stood up and spoken out to oppose discriminatory legislation being proposed in states across the country. Companies like Amazon, American Airlines, Apple, Airbnb, Dell, Dow, Google, IBM, Lyft, Marriott, Microsoft, Nike and Paypal have objected to anti-LGBTQ+ state legislation. [Four of the largest U.S. food companies](#) also condemned “dangerous, discriminatory legislation that serves as an attack on LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly transgender and nonbinary people,” and the [Walton Family Foundation issued a statement](#) expressing “alarm” at the trend of anti-transgender legislation that recently became law in Arkansas.

The Human Rights Campaign is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people. HRC envisions a world where LGBTQ+ people are embraced as full members of society at home, at work and in every community.

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